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ART. XI.—CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

1. — *Russia*. BY D. MACKENZIE WALLACE. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1877. pp. 620.

BEFORE the publication of Mackenzie Wallace's book no exhaustive and authentic account of Russia as it is since the reforms instituted by the present ruler was accessible in the English language. Indeed, we may say that no adequate information on the subject was extant in any language of Western Europe, since Haxthausen's work describes Russia as it was, and although a remarkable series of studies by Leroy-Beaulieu has been running through the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*" during the last twelvemonth, their appearance in book form may be regarded as simultaneous with Mr. Wallace's exposition. It is, of course, impossible, within the limits of this notice, to mark even in outline the answers here presented to the hundred intricate and pregnant questions connected with the social economy of the great Northern Empire. We may note, however, the main branches into which the inquiry naturally divides itself, and indicate some points where Mr. Wallace's work may be profitably supplemented with another's researches. The distribution of the Russian people into classes, which, until recently, had almost the rigidity of castes, is, of course, a preliminary topic; and here Mr. Wallace points out the wide difference between the semi-independent landed aristocracy which grew up in feudal Europe and the official nobility of Russia, which since the era of Czar Peter, at all events, has been the mere creature of the imperial pleasure. The truth is that a French noble in the Middle Ages differed from a Muscovite noble in the last three centuries precisely as *earl* and *thane* differed in Anglo-Saxon England, the former being his own man and the latter the king's man. Our attention is also directed to a significant feature of Russian society, the almost total absence of a genuine middle class. The number of persons engaged in trade and manufactures is shown to be surprisingly small, and indeed all the privileged classes taken together constitute but a very slight percentage of the total population. The changes introduced by the new law making military service compulsory for all subjects of the Czar, and the method of recruiting the Russian navy, are explained at length by Mr. Wallace; but in spite of the equalization of burdens in some directions, the weight of taxation still falls on those least able to

bear it, the peasant class. The revenues of the state are chiefly fed by the poll-tax and the impost on alcohol, by far the most profitable of the indirect contributions, and both of these are mainly sustained by the agricultural laborer. This book shows us how considerably these exactions are enhanced by the necessity of meeting the annual instalments of purchase-money for the land which the manumitted serf now owns in fee, and we are made to see that the full fruits of emancipation cannot be looked for before 1910, when the *moujik* will be relieved of this part of his burdens. Another subject which might well engross a volume to itself, and which necessarily absorbs much space in Mr. Wallace's work, is the diversity of land tenures obtaining in the Northern Empire, and particularly the system of collective ownership which exists in the vast central belt known as Muscovy proper, or Great Russia. The account of the Russian commune given in this book is unquestionably the best in English, but it is neither so full nor so lucid as M. Leroy-Beaulieu's. Neither is Mr. Wallace's description of the *moujik's* moral and intellectual status of the patriarchal manners engendered by the communal life and of the deplorable condition of women in the peasant class so effective as the French author's, although the former had apparently better opportunities of observation, having lived for some years in a Russian village. On the other hand, the portrayal of the ecclesiastical system, of the relations between the "white" and the "black" clergy, and of the various schismatic movements, is less complete and satisfactory in the papers communicated to the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*" than in the English book. Mr. Wallace exhibits the precise relation of the church to the sovereign, and points out that the ecclesiastics and the nobility are linked by none of those ties of interest and sympathy which bound the two orders together under the French *ancien régime*. About the internal economy of the monasteries he has little to say, for he does not appear to have had facilities for studying them in detail. Neither do we find much information in this volume about the actual state of the higher education in Russia, about the appliances and scope of the universities and academies established in the large cities. We miss, too, a comprehensive, discriminating view of Russian literature as it exists at the present time, — such a view as would enable us to judge whether it ought to be treated as a mature, substantial outgrowth, or with the patronizing indulgence due to incipient effort. A Russian book of tolerable cleverness is too apt to be regarded in Western Europe as a kind of miracle, and hitherto has rarely been submitted to the normal standards. Two other points to which our author allots considerable space deserve notice. One is the Imperial Code and the administration of justice by the courts of law. Under this head we are reminded that

in Russia statute legislation is but a crust superimposed upon a structure of folk-law, which presents wide discrepancies in different parts of the Empire. The system of communal ownership, for example, which is traditional with forty millions of the Czar's subjects, is not prescribed but only tolerated by the Imperial Code, and may be discarded by a given community with the concurrence of two thirds of its members. We may add that the popular impression regarding the corruption of the judicial administration and of all departments of the Russian civil service seems to be confirmed by this observer. The other topic of special interest here discussed is the extent to which the Russian people has been intrusted with self-government by the present ruler. The exact functions assigned to the local assemblies and the questionable results of the present partial experiments are set forth at length. We can only note that neither Mr. Wallace nor M. Leroy-Beaulieu considers Russia yet ripe for a parliamentary system. Such are some of the questions suggested by the study of New Russia, and we repeat that to these the present volume supplies the only adequate answers attainable in the English language.

2. — *Joan: A Tale.* By RHODA BROUGHTON, author of "Cometh up as a Flower," etc. New York: D. Appleton & Co. pp. 216.

IF we had not the Earl of Beaconsfield's word for it, we might infer from the works of certain female novelists that the social atmosphere of England is not free from a certain taint of animalism. We suppose, for instance, that the irrepressible person who signs herself "Ouida" never got anything but animadversion from the censors of the press, yet she goes on writing, and very nice people continue to buy her books. This could hardly be the case if the principles and motives which in her books shape the relations of men and women were honestly believed to be a libel on society. In her case it seems clear that the reviewer is more strait-laced than the public to which he ministers, and that the English middle-class is not at heart indisposed to accept notions of life which we should think neither rational nor wholesome. There is another author, who belongs to what ought to be described as the fleshly school, but who, we are told on the covers of her last novel, is with one exception the most popular writer of fiction of her sex. It would be unfair to ignore the positive merits which Miss Broughton's books obviously possess, although it may be doubted whether these fully account for her success. She has, for instance, a few types of character, which do duty in all her stories, but which are sufficiently clear-cut conceptions; and she has the art of making a figure winning without endowing it with